

POLICY KIT

with regard
to the Croatian Presidency of
the Council of the EU
1 January 2020 – 30 June 2020

CEEP, the European Centre of Employers and Enterprises providing Public Services and Services of General Interest, represents employers and enterprises providing public services and services of general interest, since 1961. Our members are organisations active in fields such as:

- Central & local administrations,
- Healthcare,
- Education,
- Housing,
- Waste management,
- Energy,
- Transport,
- Water,
- Environment,
- Communications.

Modern public services and services of general interest (SGIs) support the fundamental goals of the EU, enabling business, cohesion, economic and social solidarity and a better quality of life for citizens. This Policy Kit prepared considering the priorities of the Croatian presidency of the European Union, aims at presenting key CEEP positions on the main files to be discussed at EU level in the next 6 months.

MULTIANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK FOR 2021-2027: IMPLEMENTING THE EU PRIORITIES

- CEEP is convinced of the added value of a sound Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 (MFF 2021-2027) budget and believes that there are clear margins of manoeuvre to make it **more efficient and relevant**. Ongoing discussions for the MFF 2021-2027 should be linked with the debates on the Future of the EU. It is **important to agree on the Europe we want for the future and attach corresponding resources to the well-defined priorities**. The so-called EU Own Resources are an integral part of this crucial debate.
- On the structure of the MFF 2021-2027, CEEP highlights the following **transversal principles**:
 - **The EU Added Value** should become one of the key criteria for the successful use of EU funds and the success of Cohesion Policy.
 - **Flexibility**: Funding committed should remain available in the budget and be easily re-allocated to other programmes. This rule should be flexible enough to adapt to evolving circumstances.
 - **Simplification and Administrative Barriers**: CEEP calls for reducing the burden of EU funds management. The EU budget is pressured by the need to be more efficient, to focus where its impact is greatest and to ensure that burdensome rules do not hinder its achievements.
 - **Going beyond GDP**: The distribution principles of the EU structural funding should not be exclusively based on the GDP criterion but cover alternative indicators – such as poverty rate, youth and long-term unemployment or the activity rate of vulnerable groups – in line with the principles proclaimed in the EU Pillar of Social Rights.
- On the next MFF's content, the following **key priorities** should be enforced:
 - **A strong Cohesion Policy**: financial means should at least remain at the current funding level. Cohesion Policy has proved to be the EU's most successful and efficient policy in fostering economic growth while enhancing Europe's social cohesion. Whereas modifications in its functioning might be called for, it should by no means undergo budget cuts but instead be strengthened and developed further.
 - **Strategic Infrastructure**: Public investment in key physical and social infrastructures are the main levers to foster growth. The MFF provides a key opportunity for reinforcing their financing.
 - **Circular economy** should be a key feature in future funds because of its transversal aspects and multiple effects for citizens. Fostering innovation through circular economic solutions could enable to build a new way to make business, to promote research and to create new jobs.

- **Economic and Social Governance:** CEEP favours greater technical assistance to Member States in improving institutional and administrative capacities for implementing structural reforms.
- **Investing in Social Dialogue:** It is urgent to develop a mechanism for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Code of Conduct on Partnership by the Member States and make respect of its principles an ex-ante conditionality in the preparation and implementation of operational programmes.

More: [CEEP Opinion on the EU Multi-Annual Financial Framework \(MFF\) 2021-2027](#)

CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

- CEEP welcomes the joint ambition of the European Parliament and of the European Commission to organise a broad and far-reaching Conference on the Future of Europe. Building up on the record participation at the 2019 EU elections, this Conference should further give back ownership and trust about the EU project to citizens by involving them directly.
- Only a genuine inter-institutional approach, involving all institutions, consultative bodies, social partners and the civil society across Europe, could fulfil the ambitions and expectations put in this initiative. The Conference on the Future of Europe should not be an exercise ‘by the EU Bubble for the EU Bubble’.
- CEEP will closely monitor the upcoming discussions setting up the format and organisation of the Conference. With our representativity and the mandate it brings us, social partners have a legitimate place in the Conference.
- We call on the genuine and proper participation of social partners in the governance of the Conference, as well as in the events organised in this context at national, regional and local levels.

More: [No Social Partners, No Party: The Conference on the Future of Europe needs the genuine involvement of Social Partners to be meaningful](#)

BREXIT

- CEEP calls for a level-playing field in a post-Brexit EU-UK relationship, in which providers of public services and of SGIs can operate for the benefits of citizens and companies.
- Brexit will have fundamental political, economic and legal consequences for both sides. These consequences will be shaped by the features of the agreement to be negotiated. The two parties will have to reach an agreement in the following three main areas: the regime for the trade of goods and services, the new rules are needed for migration and the legal disentanglement of the UK from the EU.
- CEEP argues that a solution like the free trade agreement with Canada (CETA) do not do justice to the close European ties between the UK and the EU. A comprehensive, but flexible free trade agreement with much EU acquis and deep and comprehensive content, such as the DCFTA between the EU and Ukraine, seems most likely able to meet interconnection requirements between both countries and to foster cooperation and common policy-making in the future.
- The trade negotiations for agreements like the DCFTA should respect environmental, social and security standards. Especially, the possibility to amend the agreement in view of political or economic developments is crucial. A DCFTA-oriented agreement can assure a high degree of access to the EU single market, at least for trade in goods, but not necessarily for movement of people and services.

More: [CEEP Opinion “Brexit, Trade and SGIs “Reflection on Brexit and trade: possible options””](#)

A EUROPE THAT DEVELOPS

The path towards restoring trust in the European project among European citizens goes through ensuring inclusive and environment-friendly economic growth. There is lots of work to be done in this purpose, such as improving the effectiveness and the daily functioning of the Single Market, strengthening the enforcement of subsidiarity and proportionality alongside other EU core values such as the rule of law, democratic accountability and better regulation, ensure a level-playing field between private and public-sector stakeholders, binding public spending to further criteria and increased conditionalities, amongst others.

BALANCED REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Fostering social and economic upward convergence:

- CEEP welcomes the new initiatives to streamline the social dimension of the EU. The future instruments should address the urgent need to level the playing field all around Europe with the objective of fostering a society that is both economically performant and inclusive.
- A particular focus should be put on the implementation of the principles on the access to essential services of the Pillar of Social Rights. By endorsing the EU Pillar of Social Rights, EU institutions recognised that access to long-term care, housing services, healthcare, education and other essential services such as water energy and transport is a key condition for ensuring EU citizens' quality of life and the cohesion of our territories.
- CEEP needs a clear signal from the EU and from the Member States that the implementation of the pillar of social rights will also guarantee a better access and a better quality of public services.
- The EU Pillar of Social Rights is not a legally binding instrument. A proper way forward would therefore be for the Principles of the Pillar to be implemented via the European Semester and to serve as guidance during the drafting of the country reports and the Country Specific Recommendations.
- The way forward is not necessarily for the Pillar to produce new EU Social legislation but to make sure that the existing one is still fit for purpose. The EU Social Acquis already encompasses 70 directives providing workers with protection and rights including: information and consultation of workers, awareness of conditions of employment, equal treatment, health and safety.
- The Pillar should also provide an opportunity to foster a better understanding of the differences between the national industrial relations systems and define possible common reference principles to foster convergence. CEEP calls for the definition of common benchmarks to promote and develop quality, accessible and affordable public services in the context of national structural reforms.
- The role of the social partners will be equally critical and should therefore be integrated in the pillar in a transversal way, making it clear that social policies cannot achieve their goals and deliver sustainable effects if social partners are not fully involved in their shaping and implementation.

More: [CEEP Opinion on the European Pillar of Social Rights](#)

Strengthening the Economic and Monetary Union:

- The EMU should support a European economy that is modern, sustainable, socially just and globally competitive. Structural improvements to the EMU should make the Eurozone more robust in the event of future shocks and support related policies such as the Pillar for Social Rights.
- Following the financial and economic crisis, progress on the EMU architecture should be our first common objective. The Banking Union must be completed if it is to deliver its full potential in making the EMU more stable and resilient to shocks, whilst limiting the need for public risk sharing.

- CEEP believes that a macroeconomic stabilisation function at euro area level could potentially complement automatic stabilisers at national level under certain conditions. It should take the form of automatic stabilisation and not aim at fiscal fine-tuning of the economic cycle. The stabilisation function would therefore not be a tool to actively steer the euro area fiscal stance, but rather to reduce the need for euro area countries to address large country-specific shocks by using discretionary policies.
- Social Partners involvement allows for legitimacy, fairness and democratic accountability of reforms. However, this involvement cannot happen without ensuring that enough support is provided for capacity building of social partners' organisations.
- Long-term social investment is needed, especially in regions at the lower end of the diverging economies, and it should benefit people on lower incomes in the interests of promoting upward convergence.
- There can hardly be an effective EMU without adequate long-term financial planning, which makes a smooth agreement on the next Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 (MFF 2021-2027) critical. CEEP believes that ongoing discussions should be led in a much stronger spirit of urgency: time is pressing.
- CEEP also emphasizes that there can hardly be an effective EMU without adequate long-term financial planning, which makes a smooth agreement on the next Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 (MFF 2021-2027) critical.

More: [CEEP Opinion on the Reflection paper on the future the EMU](#)

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE

- CEEP welcomes the ambition of the European institutions to ensure all EU policies contribute to the European Green Deal objectives for a net-zero emission target.
- CEEP fully supports the goal of making Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. Together with its members, CEEP is committed to develop a balanced and sustainable strategy relying on the economy, social and environmental development. This will be precisely at these three angles where the success of the Green Deal will depend on to reach its objectives for 2050.
- Global warming is a major risk and climate policies must be developed as part of a sustainable approach.
- A prerequisite for success is the social acceptability of these policies, which requires greater equity and democracy, particularly at the local level. CEEP members manage essential infrastructure and provide SGIs that contribute to wellbeing and competitiveness; their proximity to economic actors makes them key players in climate policies.
- The EU Strategic Agenda 2019-2024 needs to recognise that role and put “enablers” of sustainable climate policies at its centre. CEEP maintains that Europe's climate strategy can only be part of a sustainable development strategy based on three pillars that lie at the heart of CEEP members' action: The economic, the environmental and the social dimension.

More: [CEEP Input to the Consultation on the EU Climate Law](#)

STRENGTHENING OF COMPETITIVENESS AND SKILLS

- Productivity is the essential element behind the consolidation of long-term sustainable economic growth and its maintenance at high and competitive levels requires serious investment in labor capacitation. Given a broader time horizon and the multiple challenges to be faced ahead – such as

automization, digitalisation and the social, demographic and environmental transitions – we must be structurally prepared.

- A skilled workforce is vital when it comes to setting high levels of productivity. Appropriate skills are also some of the best guarantees in today's labour market as it ensures that workers are able to face the necessary transitions with confidence.
- Investment in this area has a strategic character, but it must be implemented efficiently and we must turn to some of our specific obstacles, such as regional asymmetries and the inequalities across sectors of the economy in regard of their potential productivity growth.
- There is great potential to introduce alternative financial models to pool/mutualise support to employee training between companies and sectors. Employee training should also be based on appropriate skills assessments, designed according to the needs of workers and employers, and founded on forecasting the changes and developments in jobs, in tasks and the whole economy in general.
- Reliable anticipation of the supply and demand of skills and of the future structure of the EU labour market are key, together with making VET a first-class option for learners and fostering permeability between VET and higher education. It means also an increased demand for STEM, digital and soft skills, and great needs for the upskilling and reskilling of employees.
- In this context, the EU Social Partners are key players for the effectiveness of subsidiary initiatives, given the fact that the formulation of these policies must take into account employers' concrete needs, inter and intra-sectoral inequalities and, of course, their specific relations with their workers. The promotion of the Social Dialogue is, therefore, an important tool to guarantee an efficient allocation of public resources, boost productivity, build an atmosphere of confidence and laying then the foundation for the architecture of a future socially and economically prosperous for Europe.

More: [CEEP-EFEE Joint Comments on updating the Skills Agenda](#)

A MORE SATISFIED AND VITAL SOCIETY

Promoting gender equality, along with empowering women in society and on the labour market

- CEEP and its members are committed to promoting gender equality both in their role as employers and as service providers. We emphasise the need to acknowledge the role of social partners' and their work on gender quality.
- A way forward to meet the gender equality challenges would be to take a holistic approach: tackling gender norms, gender stereotypes, educational, professional and career choices, opportunities for parental leave and the sharing of caring and unpaid domestic activities, access to childcare and other care services are aspects that influence women's and men's situations in the labour market.
- To achieve gender equality in the labour market, there must be a range of effective and well-funded public services in place such as child- and elderly care, transport, education,...
- The interconnection between work and life conditions greatly influence women's and men's situation at the labour market as well as their private life. CEEP wants to stress the important role played by social partners in tackling the gender pay gap and promoting equal pay through collective bargaining. There is a need for increased awareness of the consequences that different kinds of leave and flexible working have on income and subsequently pensions.
- The business case for gender equality needs to be developed and shared widely. The current European legislative framework on gender equality is robust and provides protection. There is no

need, therefore, to amend the current European legislation or to introduce new instruments. It is better to focus on the implementation on existing regulations.

- CEEP agrees with the Commission that pay should be transparent but wants to emphasise that all policies that touch upon wage setting are and must remain national policies and hence a competence of the Member States and the national social partners. It's important to be aware of the consequences for men and women of climate change and artificial intelligence. CEEP supports the dual approach – gender mainstreaming and specific actions to promote gender equality.
- Sex disaggregated statistics is a necessary tool to discover inequalities and to monitor progress. CEEP promotes exchanges of good practices and peer-learning between its members as well as together with the other European social partners.

More: [CEEP answer to the consultation on the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2024](#)

A EUROPE THAT CONNECTS

A SINGLE EUROPEAN TRANSPORT AREA

- CEEP supports the ambition to steer Europe's transition towards a low-carbon economy that includes safer, cleaner and smarter transport solutions.
- The vision and the beginning reality of a more flexible and integrated mobility system that, at the same time, contributes to the overarching EU objective of climate action. Public transport operators are at the forefront of this change by adapting their services for citizens to the latest technological tools.
- CEEP supports Connected and Automated Mobility as an optimistic approach that underlines its potential in the interest of citizens. But to really tap into this potential, the current debate needs to go much more beyond individual mobility. The role of public transport solutions must be better integrated in the overall discussion on C-ITS and automated driving.
- With regard to the contribution of the transport to the EU's climate and energy goals, we call for an ambitious approach, streamlining this ambition for the whole road sector. Since road transport causes more than 70% of overall greenhouse gas emissions in transport and especially road traffic in cities is responsible for 23% of all the EU-wide greenhouse gas emissions, a focus on this sector is vital.

More: [CEEP Response to the Consultation on the Review of the Clean Vehicles Directive](#)

HIGH-QUALITY AND SECURE DATA INFRASTRUCTURE

- With the publication of the Public Sector Information (PSI) Directive by the European Commission in 2018, CEEP has welcomed the overall objectives to set a European regulatory framework and to enhance the digitalisation development in Europe.
- CEEP has welcomed the decision of the EU co-legislators on 24 January 2019 on their compromised text to remain the initial Commission's proposal to not contain any data on a general, automatic obligation to allow the re-use of documents produced by public undertakings.
- We also welcomed the decision of EU legislators to refrain from defining a list of High-Value datasets and instead have adopted the proposal of the Council on Article 13, where this specific list will be adopted by the means of implementing acts to allow for more scrutiny and transparency.
- We ask for the upcoming transposition phase to take the principle of reciprocity into account, especially in regard to an equal level-playing field between public undertakings and private

companies and marginal costs regulations, whilst not creating any double legislations and guaranteeing measurements of security for critical infrastructures and sensitive data from fraud and physical attacks.

- CEEP pleads in this crucial development phase to take the voice of public authorities into account when Member States evaluate the PSI Directive to ensure a true EU support tool for ongoing digitalization, innovation and investments by public services' enterprises and not entering a path to legal uncertainty and a reduction of investments, harming the long-term provision and development of public services.
- CEEP suggests to Member States to review Recital 15 and consider to go beyond the minimum requirements set in the PSI Directive to, such as applying the same rules of this Directive to private companies, especially those that provide services of general interest to guarantee reciprocity amongst market actors, as well as an implementation of the reciprocal model.
- We also ask to take the harmonization of different EU directives into account to avoid any double legislation, in particular in the transport sector.
- When defining data for the High-Value Datasets under the implementing act, CEEP asks Member States to carefully assess the impacts of publishing certain High-Value data and ensure to treat each sector, especially critical infrastructures, separately with the relevant expert groups involved.
- We ask Member States to ensure during the transposition phase to guarantee that marginal cost will be covered and ensured that the transfer of the re-use of data do not cause any additional costs for public undertakings. Here, the principle of reciprocity has to be taken into account in regard to the charges of marginal costs, which emerges from data generation, preparation and provision.

More: [CEEP Position Paper- Key messages for the Transposition Phase on the re-use of Public Sector Information Directive \(PSI Directive\)](#)

INTEGRATED ENERGY MARKET

- CEEP is convinced that an all-inclusive approach, in which all sectors work closely together, is necessary in order to reach the net zero CO₂-emission-target in 2050. Developing a sustainable gas and electricity market will be key to this goal.
- As a general principle, CEEP supports that the decarbonization process in the energy sector must be cost-efficient for all sustainable technology types.
- Therefore, sector integration and sector coupling must play a greater role in European policies. As underlined by the European Commission in its long-term Strategy, it means that stronger connections must be made between the electricity sector, and other sectors as heating, transport, industry and gas.
- For the latter, innovative technologies such as Power-to-Gas (P2G) will link the sectors together. In this respect the existing distribution gas infrastructure (DSOs) will likely play an important role especially in reaching the goals in a cost-efficient way.
- CEEP recognises that Power to Gas (P2G) will certainly play a role in the future energy system.
- In general, the current renewable electricity GO system appears to be a well-designed and suited tool, as it constitutes a guarantee of reliability, while also enabling "green offers" to develop for consumers having a willingness to pay a premium for it. It should be recognized that the purpose of GOs is "disclosure" and not "support". To avoid confusion, it should therefore be preferable to clearly distinguish support mechanisms and GOs and make sure that "windfall profits" do not arise when RES production benefits from both a support scheme and the sale of corresponding GOs.

- Carbon-neutral gas will play a role in the future energy sector whereas special importance should be attached to the generation and supply of renewable gas and biogas and the respective roles of actors.
- EU-rules must lead to a fair level playing field and must not to promote one actor over the other.
- It is important that “renewable / green gas” will be accepted by the consumer and, therefore, a good communication – similar to “green electricity” – is key.

More: [CEEP Response to the Regulatory Challenges for a sustainable Gas Sector](#)

A EUROPE THAT PROTECTS

COMPREHENSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE MIGRATION POLICY

- European Citizens have expressed strong concerns regarding how we manage migration. Despite the enormous benefits refugees can bring to European economies and societies, their integration remains a long and arduous process that requires improvement.
- The European Social Partners signed with the European Commission a “European Partnership for integration offering opportunities for refugees to integrate into the Labour Market”.
- The lack of consensus between Member states on how to make the CEAS more efficient or on the implementation of solidarity mechanisms reveals the discrepancy of views on migration in the member states.
- The successful integration of migrants could make the host country population more accepting of newcomers, allowing for a fairer distribution of refugees across member states and ensuring the overall sustainability of the asylum system.
- Employers will be instrumental in integration strategies however they suffer from the lengthy and cumbersome process of qualification recognition; the insufficient number of language and job-specific training opportunities; and the lack of coordination with public authorities.
- The EU still has the possibility to enhance its added value in this area. The most viable option is to engage in a serious dialogue with European employers. In fact, designing policies that address their concerns, and enhancing their positive perception of how the EU can help in this field is crucial.
- By addressing the needs of employers, the EU would be in the position to become part of the solution, act as a legitimate interface between employers and national authorities and offer a credible counter-narrative to the anti-migration discourse.
- In any case integration strategies should be an integral part of our narrative on managing migration next to the protection and management of our external borders.

More: [European Partnership for integration offering opportunities for refugees to integrate into the Labour Market](#)

PROTECTION OF FREEDOMS AND DEMOCRACY

- The European Social Partners (CEEP, ETUC, BusinessEurope, SMEunited) fully agree that our democracies must be safeguarded and call on EU leaders to include the upholding of the rule of law in the Strategic Agenda 2019-2024. They also stress their full commitment to supporting the rule of law as one of the foundations on which the European project and the democratic values it stands for are built.
- The Rule of Law is essential for the proper functioning of the European Union, its institutions, its Single Market, labour market and society. It is an important guarantee for European citizens,

employers and workers, being paramount to social inclusion, economic competitiveness and protection of the environment alike.

- The rule of law also requires effective, independent and impartial institutions (e.g. courts, inspection services and bodies) and redress mechanisms so that these rights are justiciable, and their legal protection can be ensured. The longstanding role of social partners in setting, applying and enforcing these rights, particularly through social dialogue and collective bargaining, should be fully recognised.
- The European Social Partners therefore fully agree that the rule of law must be respected, better explained, promoted and enforced across Europe. We remain fully committed to defending our common European rules and values and to speaking up for their protection across the continent through an enhanced dialogue with social partners and civil society at large.

More: [European Social Partner's Statement on the Rule of Law](#)

AN INFLUENTIAL EUROPE

LEADING INTERNATIONAL ACTOR

- The EU has the potential of a worldwide standard-setter in trade policy by combining the necessary economic weight with a long tradition of values necessary to fostering a rules-based international order. The EU must commit to promoting a balanced, multilateral and sustainable Globalisation.
- CEEP therefore endorses pursuing international trade agreement negotiations currently under way or opening new ones in the future, but this is subject to certain conditions in terms of international trade's social, public health-related or environmental impact
- Simultaneously, it is important to recognise that Globalisation is a double-edged sword. External trade can either stimulate the needed inclusive and environment-friendly economic growth and help levelling the playing field with other regions of the world or play against the legitimate interests of entire societies and foster a global environment where might is right. The contribution of public services, services of general interest (SGIs) and services of general economic interest (SGEIs) in providing citizens with a decent lifestyle and thus in countering anxieties regarding the negative sides of Globalisation cannot be over-stressed.
- CEEP presents the following recommendations:
 - o On that front just like on many others, the EU should avoid any sense of naivety and follow a strategic and harmonised approach combining trade policy with other relevant policies: environmental, competition, economic...
 - o The EU should recognise legislative provisions for services of general interest (SGI) as an Acquis+. SGIs provide citizens with accessible and qualitative services, serve as safety nets and strengthen social cohesion. Simultaneously, they contribute to an entrepreneurship-friendly climate, necessary to any policy of economic development. welcomes the principle of an EU trade political agenda pushing forward ambitious social and environmental criteria, through including Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) chapters in current and future trade agreements.
 - o Considering that trade and domestic economic power are two sides of a same coin, the EU should also make better use of available resources to adapt to demographic ageing. Facilitating inclusion of ageing and disadvantaged people into the workforce could be a first step in this direction. Furthermore, differences between rural and metropolitan areas must be reduced through stronger EU-wide cooperation. For a balanced lifestyle, adapting "best practices" and considering turning them into binding legislation is recommended.

More: [CEEP Opinion on the Reflection paper 'Harnessing globalisation': The EU in a Globalised World](#)

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